

The Sunday School Service.

BY DAVID BAILEY.

Dec. 14th, 1884.

Vanity of Worldly Pleasure.—Eccles. 2: 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.—Eccles. 2: 13."

[Open the Bible and read the lesson.]

INTRODUCTION.

Solomon's life was a series of experiments. First he sought wisdom, but it was not the true wisdom which giveth "peace that passeth all understanding," it was wisdom as the world sees it, and it did not satisfy, for of this he said: "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Tiring of wisdom, he turned his attention to pleasure, but soon discovered that it too was "vanity."

Then he tried wine. The language he uses in this connection is peculiar, it shows that he intended to experiment for the good of generations to follow. But it is to be feared that this experiment was ruinous to Solomon and that he never recovered his integrity. It is probable that his appetite became so depraved that he could not resist the temptation and that he spoke from his own experience when he said: "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

In a line with this last experiment, in fact as a development of it, came his desire to test the pleasures of the world. He built palaces and made gardens and fountains and planted groves. He lived most luxuriously. Josephus says that Solomon was accustomed to ride out to a country place, still called "The little paradise," accompanied by the royal guard of soldiers all dressed in Tyrian purple, with their hair sprinkled with gold dust; and Solomon himself says that he denied himself nothing that his heart desired in the way of earthly pleasure, but when he came to look upon his work he said: "And, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

So closed a life that might have been a useful one if he had been possessed of true wisdom.

LESSON.

Verse 1. "I said." Solomon had grown tired of study, so he addressed himself to his heart. "Go to now." About the same as "come now." "Vanity." Breath, therefore anything intangible, empty.

Verse 2. "What doeth it." What good does it do? What profit is there in it?

Still one step lower, context, it was not, at the surrender to the he had an object in what good there was could be really profitable

made me." The author concludes. What he did was for his

"Gardens and orchards." The translated "orchard" is "paradise" is a park or pleasure ground. The some of these groves are still pointed it. While the seeker after earthly pleasures takes gardens and plans groves with walks and drives, the Christian seeks diligently for the paradise prepared by God with its tree of Life, and the peaceful pools of the water of Life.

Verse 6. "Pools of water." Those acquainted with irrigation as carried on in some of our Western States will readily understand that it was necessary for Solomon to make pools for water to support the vegetation in parks through the dry season.

Verse 7. "Got." Purchased. This is shown by his speaking immediately of those born in his house. "Servants." They were in one sense slaves, but not as we understand the term, for they lost no right except that of pay for his labor, nor could he be retained in slavery beyond a certain time unless he remained voluntarily. "Great and small cattle." Oxen and sheep.

Verse 8. "Gold and silver." Solomon's income, as mentioned elsewhere, was more than fifteen millions of dollars in money besides other revenues.

"Musical instruments." It is thought that this should be "wife and wives," or "queen and concubines," but some commentators object to this translation.

Verse 9. "Great." These splendors and his wisdom made him great in the eyes of his subjects and the surrounding people. "My wisdom." This shows plainly that his wisdom was not true wisdom. True wisdom would have guided him so that he would not have met with so many disappointments.

Verse 10. "Whatever my eyes desired." He places desire in the eyes, probably because it is by sight that desirable objects make an impression on the mind. "This was my portion." What could be seen and enjoyed in passing was all the benefit he could hope to receive from his labors.

Verse 11. "All was vanity." He could now see that all his planning and labor had been for naught, that all he had done was of no profit. He finds that all his life he has been as a dog barking at the moon.

Verse 12. "What can the man do?" He thought that no ordinary man could accomplish more than he, with his wealth, wisdom, and royal authority.

Verse 13. "Wisdom." He here refers to true wisdom which will guide man in straight paths.

From Christopher, Kansas.

DEAR EVANGELIST: I should have written sooner, but owing to sickness, I have been unable to do so; but through the aid and assisting grace of God, I have again been restored to my health.

We held our lovefeast on November 8th, with a crowded house, but with good order. We were disappointed in not having Elder Daniel Harader present at our feast, who was hindered by sickness. Our beloved Elder, Jacob W. Beer, of Nickerson, Kansas, was the only minister present with us. The little band of followers here were all rejoiced and encouraged in their Christian duties. Several German Baptist brethren were present with us. None of them would commune with us, but they acknowledged that there was no difference in our practice and theirs. One brother that the German Baptists had always claimed came out and said he was with the Brethren, and communed with us. We have yet to learn the result of this.

Elder Beer preached a good sermon from 1 Cor. 11: 1-19, on the following Sunday, to a full house. After services, brother S. F. Leaman and sister Leaman, and our Elder returned home.

We are few in number and would be pleased to have brethren move here. For information from this part of the West by those wishing to locate here, cheerfully given by addressing me. We have good soil and climate and everything else desirable. I have been here twelve years, and have raised very good crops each year.

I will now close by saying, may God bless every lawful effort that is put forth for the advancement of His cause and kingdom throughout the land. Brethren pray for us. We all desire your prayers. May God bless and keep us.

E. C. MERCER.

Nov. 20th.

From the Millersburg, Iowa, Church.

Our church at this place is in a prosperous condition. When brother Swihart was here we had quite an outpouring of the Spirit calling sinners home to Jesus, and they have not stopped coming home since. On the first Sabbath in November, at our regular meeting at Pilot Grove school house, one young sister came out on the Lord's side. I appointed a special meeting at Pleasant Hill the next Sabbath, to baptize, and when the time came two sisters came also and were both baptized. The next Sabbath at Pleasant Hill at our regular appointment, another young sister came out and was baptized. During the following week three more made application and I appointed another special meeting, on the fifth Sabbath, at Pleasant Hill, and all three were baptized.

At the meeting Elder Mohler was present, and the ordinance of laying on of hands was attended to in the evening, on the three baptized that day. The other three near Pilot Grove, have not had hands laid on them yet.

We have social meeting every Thursday evening, and all feel much encouraged.

At the last baptizing quite a number of Indians were present, who were very attentive. They said afterward that they thought we were going in swimming. I presume they could not understand why we took so cold a day for it.

JOHN A. MEYERS.

Millersburg, Iowa.

A Peculiar Hebrew Tribe.

Between Damascus and Jerusalem is a tribe of about three thousand Hebrews, which has been there probably since the beginning of the Christian era. They have neither city nor town; they live in tents. The temple is represented by a more spacious tent. They have never admitted among them a person of different race or religion. Their ordinary language is Hebrew. In their relations with others they speak Arabian. These relations, however, are very few, for they have remained, like the primitive races, exclusively tillers of the soil and warriors. They cultivate the ground, armed from head to foot, always ready to defend their portion of earth, from which, with great difficulty, they derive a meagre sustenance. They live on little, and are content to thus live in this sort of native country which they have occupied for centuries.—Paris Gaulois.

Brother P. J. Brown's Mission.

THE WORK AT MASONTOWN, PA.

Two years ago there were eight members at Masontown, consisting of our veteran brother, John Sterling, and family. They were, like many others, locked out of the house they had helped to build and kept in order. They were opposed and treated as heather and publican; but this is the old story and somewhat stale. However they did not fold their hands and complain but went to work, and by the aid of such young soldiers as brother Gnagey, of Meyersdale, they increased their number to about thirty up to this time. This is not all; for when the Sterling family goes to work they mean business. They are building one of the best brick church edifices in the county. It is now under roof and in process of being finished. I think the house is 45x60 feet, and for architectural style, and substantial make-up will be the best house in the brotherhood. So far as exterior appearances are concerned Johnstown will have to yield to Masontown. The property is deeded to the "Brethren church, as reorganized at Dayton, Ohio, in 1883. The entire community, with the exception of one peculiar sect, is giving substantial aid to this enterprise; nearly all the business men of Uniontown, twelve miles off, have their names on the list of contributors. And there is still a shortage of a few thousand dollars, but with John Sterling at the helm as canvasser, all is safe. The next Sunday school convention of Western Pennsylvania, is to be held in the new church and the dedication will be deferred until that time. They also think of holding a ministerial convention in connection with the S. S. convention. So all parties are looking forward with interest to the time. May we not hope for a bright future for these deserving Masontown-brethren. We believe in the doctrine that "God helps those who help themselves."

FROM PIGEON CREEK, PA.

There are a few faithful brethren scattered through what used to be called the "Ten Mile church" in Washington county, Pa. Notably among them are S. W. Tombaugh and Jonathan Moore and their families. Being locked out of one of their meeting houses, and threatened with the same fate in the other, they thought it was time to take more decisive steps toward a more perfect organization. And at their earnest solicitation I visited them on November 15th, and preached at Pigeon Creek one full week; but under the general demoralization of everything in the shape of Dunkardism, we could do nothing more than strengthen this outpost, by setting before the people the real cause of the trouble, and paving the way for better results in the future. During our meeting brother James A. Murray, of Aleppo, Greene county, dropped in and assisted in the work. Brother A. J. Sterling and his father, of Masontown, also came to our assistance. And on Saturday evening 22nd, we had a very pleasant and enjoyable communion service. Twenty members surrounded the tables, among them were four sisters from Masontown. The house is large and was well filled with quiet and orderly spectators. It was the united testimony that the general order of all present was exceptionally good.

On Sunday, 23rd, brother Jonathan Moore was chosen and installed as a deacon, and brother J. M. Tombaugh was advanced to the full ministry. He is a faithful young brother, and we hope under his care the cause will prosper. On Monday evening we preached at Highland school house, near the house of brother Moore, and on Tuesday I had the pleasure of paying a visit to my sister in the flesh, Mary Brooks, and family, at Carmichaels. The visit was one of mutual enjoyment.

On Wednesday, by the generosity of brother Isaac Murray, we were brought to Masontown, and stopped with the Sterling family, where the brethren will always feel at home. Sister Mary, formerly a member of the faculty of Ashland college, is engaged in teaching in the large school in Masontown. She is a general favorite in the school, and an indefatigable worker in the church. If we had plenty such workers as sister Mary, in all of our churches and in all the schools, the world would certainly be the better for their having passed through it.

Preached in the M. E. church in Masontown, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, to attentive audiences. Also visited sister Allenbaugh, 95 years of age, having lived there ninety years. She can tell all about old times, including Indian depredations, the hardships of early settlers, &c., but of latter day occurrences she seems to remember but little. We were also called upon to share in the sorrow of our esteemed and lovely sister, the wife of brother A. J. Sterling, whose mother lay a corpse during our stay at Masontown.

On Friday morning we started by steam-

boat for West Brownsville, and from thence by rail to Pittsburg. And the husband, Mr. Johnson, and the children and friends of the deceased wife and mother, started for Smithfield, where the funeral services and interment were to take place. It was to all a sad farewell.

On Saturday 29th, I came to Bristolville, Trumbull county, Ohio, where I filled the regular appointments,—three in number. Our brethren here are in good spirits. This morning I am at Warren, ready to go home, and finding the train several hours late, gives me time to write this hasty sketch.

Love to the EVANGELIST family.

P. J. BROWN.

Warren, Ohio, Dec. 1st.

From Hagerstown, Md.

DEAR BRETHREN; Our meeting at Mt. Pleasant has closed. Direct result five by baptism. Others are impressed and we hope for additions in the near future. While special services have closed, our efforts for souls will continue. We have material to work on, and material to work with; hence we are hopeful of greater success.

Our home was with brother Welty Fahrney. We will ever remember the kindness received from himself and family. "We" means self, wife and babies. Brother Grossnickle and family, with brother Cost and wife rendered us special assistance.

I take pleasure in announcing the gift of a pair of boots from brother Fahrney, a suit of clothes from brother Schiendal of Funkstown, and a barrel of flour from sister Cost. These with other members have given me help internally and externally. I pray God to give them help eternally. I would like to mention by name all who helped me during our services but space forbids. I will only say that the man who falls among the progressive brethren of Beaver Creek congregation falls into the hands of good Samaritans, the priests and Levites are on the other side of the fence.

Our meeting at Funkstown will commence soon after Christmas. If any of the Brethren come this way, I hope they will make arrangements to stop with us. When it comes to preaching I will be very liberal with them. The Lord bless and prosper our cause.

J. D. McFADEN.

Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 1st, 1884.

Quit Gracefully.

"That was a good discourse if it had not been spoiled by the winding up," is a remark not unfrequently heard in the company of those returning home from church. It is agreed that it is very unpretty in those who heard so much that was good in the sermon to confess themselves diverted therefrom by an unfortunate ending. Why not speak of that which was good, and if there were some little failings let them pass in silence and be forgotten? But the trouble is, that the unfortunate features of the discourse often come in at the close, and the fact that many excellent things may have been said makes the crooked closing all the more provoking. A very feeble sermon, with a timely, graceful and spirited conclusion, will hardly ever fail to leave a good impression. Dr. Craig used to say that there were few qualifications that better adorned the ministerial office than a liberal endowment of quitting grace.

Many a sermon is made tedious and unprofitable not because of its too great length, but because the preacher begins to close before he is half done talking! Whenever a speaker warns his hearers of his intention to close he should understand that they will expect him to keep his word. After a reasonable indulgence the hearer instinctively closes his ears against him.

As a rule a preaching service should be concluded with a brief prayer and a spirited and appropriate hymn, carefully avoiding all outside matters.

It is a sad sight to see a pastor retiring in disgust from a place he has been trying to fill. Admit that some things have occurred that are not pleasing to him, what excuse is that for going off in a pet, and with the fires of his wrath burning the bridges behind him? Charity beareth all things and is not easily provoked. Charity suffereth long and is kind—doth not behave itself unseemly. The minister's position is not to vindicate his self-respect by showing temper, but to vindicate the power of divine grace by showing patience and charity.

It is a pleasant thing to quit well. It covers weak places in the past and leaves an open door for the future. It honors Christ and His gospel. It encourages the doubting and challenges the respect of the unbelieving. The aphorism that all is well that ends well has a converse that is equally true—that all is evil that ends badly.—Herald of Gospel Liberty.